Adam Bell.

MERRY it was in the green Forest,
among the leaves green
where as men hunt east and west
with bowes and arrowes keen.
To raise the Deer out of their den,
such sights have not oft been seen:
As by these precmen of the North Countrey
by them it is I mean.
The one of them height Adam Bell,
another Clim of the Clough,
The third was William of Cloudesle,
an Archer good enough.
They were outlawed for Venison,
these yeomen were very stout:
They swore them brethren on a day,
to English wood for to gone.
Now lith and listen Gentlemen,
that of mirth loveth to hear:
Two of them were single men,
the third had wedded fere.
William was the wedded man,
much more then was his care:
He said to his brethren on a day,
to Carlile he would fare,
There to speak with fair Alice his wife,
and with his children three:
By my troth said Adam Bell,
not by the counsel of me:
For if we go to Carlile brother,
and from this wild wood wend,
If that the Justice do you take,
your life is at an end.

If that I come not to morrow brother,
by prime to you again:
Trust you then that I am taken,
or else that I am slain.
He took his leave of his brethren two
and to Carlile he is gone:
There he knocked at his own window,
shortly and anon.
Where be you fair Alice? he said,
my Wife and Children three:
Lightly let in thine own Husband
William of Cloudesle.
Alas then said fair Alice,
and sighed very sore:
This place hath been beset for you,
full half a year and more.
Now am I here said Cloudesle,
I would that in I were:
Now fetch us meat and drink enough,
and let us make good cheer.
She fetcht him meat and drink plenty,
like a true wedded wife:
And pleased him with what she had,
whom she loved as her life.
There lay an old wife in that place,
a little before the fire:
Which William had found of charity,
more then seven year.
Up she rose, and forth she goes,
evil might she speed therefore;
For she had not set no foot on ground,
in seven years before,
She went into the Justice hall,
as fast as she could hie:
This night she said is come to town,

William

VVilliam of Cloudesle.
Whereat the Justice was full fain,
and so the Sheriff also.
Thou shalt not travel hither for nought,
thy meed thou shalt have ere thou go.
They gave to her a right good gown,
of Scarlet it was I heard sain:
She took the gift and home she went,
and couched her down again.
They raised the Town of merry Carlile,
in all the haste they can:
And thronging fast unto the Boure,
as fast as they might gan;
There they beset the good yeoman,
about on every side:
VVilliam heard great noise of the folk,
that thitherward fast hide.
Alice opened a back window,
and looked all about:
She was ware of the Justice and Sheriff,
and with that a great rout.
Alas treason, then cried Alice,
ever woe may thou be:
Go into my chamber husband, she said,
sweet VVilliam of Cloudesle.
He took his sword and his buckler,
his bow and children three:
And went into the strongest chamber,
where he thought surest to be.
Fair Alice like a lover true,
with a Pollax in her hand:
Said, he shall dye that cometh in
this door, while I may stand.
Cloudesle bent a right good bow,
that was of mighty tree:

He smote the Justice on the brest,
that his arrow burst in three.
Gods curse on his heart said William,
this day thy coat did on.
If it had been no better then mine,
it had been neer the bone.
Yeeld thee Cloudesle said the Justice,
and thy bow and thy arrowes thee fro:
Gods curse on his heart said fair Alice,
that my husband counselleth so.
Set fire on the house said the Sheriff,
sith no better it will be:
And burn we therein, William he said,
his wife and children three.
They fired the house in many a place,
the fire flew on high:
Alas then said fair Alice,
I see we here shall dye.
William opened a back window,
that was in his chamber hie:
And there with sheets he did let down,
his wife and children three:
For Christs love do them no harm,
but wreak you all on me.
William shot so wondrous well,
till his arrowes were all gone:
And fire so fast about him fell,
that his bow-string brent in two.
The sparkles brent and fell upon,
good William of Cloudesle:
But then was he a woful man,
and said, this is a Cowards death to me.
Lever had I said William,

with my sword in the rout to run:
Then here amongs mine enemies wood,
so cruelly to burn.
He took his sword and buckler then,
and among them all he ran:
Where the people thickest were,
he smote down many a man.
There might no man abide his strokes,
so fiercely on them he ran:
Then they drew windows and doors on him,
and so took that yeoman.
There they him bound hand and foot,
and in a deep dungeon him cast.
Now Cloudesle then said the Justice,
thou shalt be hanged in hast,
One bow shall I make said the Sheriff,
a pair of new gallowes thou shalt have,
And all the gates of Carlile shall be shut,
there shall no man come in thereat,
There shall not help Clim of the Clough,
nor yet Adam Bell,
Though they come with a thousand moe,
nor all the debils in hell.
Early in the morning the Justice arose,
to the gates fast gan he goue:
And commanded to shut close,
lightly every chone.
Then went to the market place,
as fast as they can hie:
A pair of new gallowes there he did set up,
beside the Pillory.
A little boy stood them among,
and askt what meant that gallow tree:
They said to hang a good yeoman,
called William of Cloudesle.

That

That little Boy was Town Swine-heard,
and kept fair Alice swine:
Full oft he had seen Cloudesse in the wo
and gave him there to dine;
He went out of a crevice of the wall,
and lightly to the Wood he ran:
There he met with these weight yeomen,
shortly and anon.
Alas then said the little boy,
you tarry here all too long:
Cloudesse is tane and doom'd to death,
and ready to be hang'd.
Alas then said good Adam Bell,
that ever we saw this day:
He might have tarryed here with us,
so oft we did him pray.
He might have dwelt in green Forrest,
under these shadows sheen:
And kept both him and us at rest,
out of trouble and teen.
Adam bent a right good bow,
a great heart soon he had slain:
Take that child he said to thy dinner,
and bring me mine arrow again.
Now we go hence said these jolly yeomen,
tarry we no longer here:
We shall him borrow by Gods grace,
though we buy it full dear.
To Carlile went these good yeomen,
in a merry morning of May:
Here is a fit of Cloudesse,
another is for to say.

AND when they came to merry Carlile,
in a fair morning tide:

They found the gates shut them unto,
round about on every side.
Alas then said good Adam Bell,
that ever we were made men,
These gates are shut so wondrous well,
that we may not come therein.
Then spake Clim of the Clough,
with a wile we will us in bring:
Let us say we be messengers,
straight come from the King.
Adam said I have a Letter, well
let us wisely worke:
wile will say we have the Kings seal,
I hold the Porter no Clerk.
Then Adam Bell beat at the gate,
with strokes great and strong:
The Porter heard such a noise thereat,
and to the gates he throng.
Who is there said the Porter,
that maketh all this knocking?
We be two messengers said they then,
become right from the King.
We have a Letter said Adam Bell,
to the Justice I must it bring:
Let us in our message to do,
that we were again to the King.
Here commeth none in said the Porter,
by him that died on a tree:
Till that a false theef be hang'd,
cal'd Wil iam of Cloudesle.
Then spake Clim of the Clough,
and swore by Mary free:
If that we stand long without,
like a theef hang'd shalt thou be.
Lo here we have the Kings Seal,

what Lurden art thou wood?
The Porter weend it had been so,
and lightly did off his hood.
Welcome is my Lords seal he said,
For that you shall come in:
He opened the gates full shortly,
an ebil opening for him.
Now are we in said Adam Bell,
whereof we are right fain:
But Christ he knowes assuredly,
how we shall out again.
Had we the Keyes said Clim of the Clough,
right well then should we speed:
Then might we come out well enough,
when we see time and need.
They called the porter to counsell,
and wrung his neck in two:
And cast him in a deep dungeon,
and took the Keys him fro.
Now am I Porter said Adam Bell,
see brother the Keys we habe here.
The worst Porter in merry Carlile,
that came this hundred yeat,
Now we will our bowes bend,
into the Town will we go:
For to deliber our dear brother,
that lyeth in care and woe.
Then they bent their good yew bowes,
and looked their strings were round,
The Market place in merry Carlile,
they beset in that stound,
And as they looked them beside,
a pair of new gallowes there they see,
And the Justice with a Quest of Squires,
that judgeth William hanged to be.

And Cloudeſle lay ready there in a Cart,
faſt bound both foot and hand:
And a ſtrong rope about his neck,
already for to hang.
The Juſtice cal'd to him a lad,
Cloudeſle's clothes he ſhould habe,
To take the meaſure of that yeoman,
and thereby to make him a grabe.
I habe ſeen a great marbel ſaid Cloudeſle,
as between this and prime:
He that maketh a grabe for me,
himſelf may lye therein.
Thou ſpeakeſt proudly ſaid the Juſtice,
I will thee hang with my hand:
Full well heard this his brethren two,
there ſtill as they did ſtand.
Then William caſt his eye aſide,
and ſaw his two brethren
At the corner of the market place well pre-
ready the Juſtice to chaſe. (par'd,
I ſee comfort ſaid Cloudeſle,
yet hope I well to fare:
If I might habe my hands let free,
right little might I care.
Then ſpake good Adam Bell,
to Clim of thee Clough forree:
Brother ſee you mark the Juſtice well,
for yonder you may him ſee.
At the Sheriff ſhoot I will,
ſtrongly with an arrow keen:
A better ſhoot in merry Carlile,
this ſeben years was not ſeen,
They looſed their arrows both at once,
of no man they had dread:

The one hit the Justice the other the Sheriff
that both their sides gan bleed,
All men wonded that stood them nye,
when the Justice fell to the ground:
And the Sheriff nye him by,
either had his deaths wound.
All the Citizens fast gan flee,
they durst no longer abide;
There lightly they loosed Cloudesle,
where he with ropes lay tyde,
William stept to an Officer of the Town,
his Axe out of his hand he wrung:
On each side he smote them down,
him thought he tarryed all too long.
William said to his brethren two,
this day let us live and dye:
If ever you have need as I have now,
the same shall you finde by me.
They shot so well that tide,
for their strings were of silk sure,
That they kept the street on every side,
the battell did long endure.
They fought together like brethren true,
like hardy men and bold:
Many a man to the ground they threw,
and made many a heart cold.
But when their arrowes were all gone,
men pressed on them full fast:
They drew their swords then anon,
and their bowes from them cast.
They went lightly in their way,
with swords and bucklers round:
By that it were mid of the day,
they made many a wound,
Many an out horn in Carlile was blown,

and

and the Wels backward did ring:
Many a woman said alas,
and many their hands did wring.
The Maior of Carlile forth come was,
and with him a full great rout:
These yeomen dread him full sore,
for of their lives they were in great doubt;
The Maior came armed a full great pace,
with a Pollax in his hand:
Many a strong man with him was,
within that stour to stand.
The Maior smot at Cloudesle with his bill
his Buckler brast in two:
Full many a yeoman with great evil,
alas treason they cry'd for woe.
Keep we the gates fast they bad,
that these Traytors thereout not go:
But all for nought was that they wrought,
for so fast down they were laid,
Till they all three that so manfully fought,
were gotten out of a braid.
Have here your keys said Adam Bell,
my office here I forsake:
If you do by my counsel,
a new porter do you make,
He threw the keys at their heads,
and bad them evil to thrive:
And all that letteth any good yeoman,
to come and comfort his wife,
Thus be the good yeomen gone to the wood
as lightly as leaf on linde;
They laugh and be merry in their mood,
their enemies were fast behinde,
When they came to English wood,
under the trusty tree;

There they found Bowes full good,
and Arrowes great plenty.
So God me help said Adam Bell,
and Clim of the Clough so free,
I would we were in merry Carlile,
before that fair meny.
Then sate they down and made good cheer,
and eat and drunk full well:
Here is a fit of these wight yeomen,
another I will you tell.

AS they sate in English wood,
under their trusty tree:
They thought they heard a woman weep,
but her they could not see.
Sore then sighed fair Alice,
that ever I saw this day:
For now is my dear husband slain,
alas and well away.
Might I have spoke with his deer brethren,
or with either of them twain,
To shew to them what him befel,
my heart were out of pain.
Cloudesle walkt a little aside,
and looke under the green wood linde,
He saw his wife and children three,
full woe in heart and minde.
Welcome wife then said William,
under this trusty tree:
I had weend yesterday by sweet S. John,
thou shouldst me never see.
Now well is me she said that ye be here,
my heart is out of woe:
Dame be ye glad and merry and glad,
and thank my brethren two.

Hereof

Hereof to speak said Adam Bell,
I wis it is no boot:
The meat that we must sup withall,
it resteth yet fast on foot.
Then went they down unto the lawnd,
These Noblemen all three:
Each of them slew a Hart of Greece,
the best they could there see,
Habe here the best Alice my wife,
said William of Cloudesle:
Because ye so boldly stood by me,
when I was slain full nye.
Then they went to supper,
with such meat as they had:
And thanked God for their fortune,
they were merry and glad,
And when they had supped well,
certain without any lease.
Cloudesle said we will to our King,
to get us a Charter of peace.
Alice shall be at our sojourning,
in a Nunnery here beside:
My two sons shall with her go,
and there they shall abide.
My eldest son shall go with me,
for him I have no care:
And he shall bring you word again,
how that we do fare.
Thus be these good yeomen to London gon,
as fast as they may dye:
Till they came to the Kings pallace,
where they would needs be.
And when they came to the Kings Court,
unto the pallace gate:
Of no man would they ask leave,

but

but boldly went in thereat,
They proceeded preſent into the hall,
of no man they had dreed:
The Porter came after, and did them call,
and with them gan to chide.
The Uſher ſaid, yeoman what would you have
I pray you tell to me:
You might have Officers ſtent,
good ſirs from whence be ye?
Sir, we be out-lawes of the Forreſt,
certain without any leaſe:
And hither we be come to the King,
to get us a charter of peace.
And when they came before the King,
as it was the Law of the Land:
They kneeled down without letting,
and each held up his hand.
They ſaid, Lord we beſeech thee here,
that ye will grant us grace:
For we have ſlain your fat follow Deer,
in many a ſundry place.
What be your names then ſaid the King,
anon that you tell me:
Adam Bell, Clim of the Clough,
and William of Cloudeſle.
Be ye thoſe theeves ſaid the King,
that men have told to me:
Here to God I make a vow,
ye ſhall be hang'd all three:
Ye ſhall be dead without mercy,
as I am King of this Land:
He commanded his Officers every chone,
faſt on them to lay hand.
Therefore they took theſe good yeomen,
and arreſted them all three.

So may I thrive said Adam Bell,
this game liketh not me.
But good Lord we beseech you now,
that ye will grant us grace,
Inasmuch as we do to you come,
or else that we may from you pass,
With such weapons as we have here,
till we be out of your place:
And if we live this hundred year,
we will ask of you no grace.
Ye speak proudly said the King,
ye shall be hanged all three.
That were great pity said the Queen,
if any grace might be.
My Lord when I came first into this Land,
to be your wedded Wife,
The first boon that I would ask,
you would grant me belike:
And I asked ye never none till now,
therefore good Lord grant it me.
Now ask it Madam said the King,
and granted it shall be.
Then good Lord I you beseech,
these yeomen grant ye me:
Madam ye might have asked a boon,
that should have been worth them all three:
Ye might have asked Towers and Towns,
Parks and Forrests plenty:
None so pleasant to my pay the said,
nor none so leef to me.
Madam, sith it is your desire,
your asking granted shall be:
But I had lever have given you,
good market Towns three.
The Queen was a glad woman,

and

and said, Lord gramarcy.
I dare undertake for them,
that true men they shall be:
But good Lord speak some merry word,
that they might comfort see.
I grant you grace then said the King,
wash fellows and to meat go ye.
They had not sitten but a while,
certain without leasing:
There came two messengers out of the North
with letters to the King.
And when they came before the King,
they kneeled down upon their knee:
And said your Officers greet you well,
of Carlile in the North Country.
How fareth my Justice (said the King)
and my Sheriff also:
Sir they be slain without leasing,
and many an Officer moe.
Who hath them slain, said the King,
anon that you tell me:
Adam Bell, Clim of the Clough,
and William of Cloudesle.
Alas for truth then said the King,
my heart is wondrous sore:
I had lever than a thousand pound,
I had known this before,
For I have granted them grace,
and that forethinketh me:
But had I known all this before,
they had been hanged all three,
The King opened the Letter anon,
himself he read it the: (slain,
And there he found how these outlawes had
three hundred men and moe,

First the Justice and the Sheriff,
and the Maior of Carlile Town,
Of all the Constables and Catchpoles,
alive be left not one.
The Bailiffs and the Beadles both,
and the Sergeants of the Law:
And forty Forresters of the fee,
these outlaws have ylaw,
And broke his Parks and slain his deer,
of all they chose the best:
So perillous outlaws as they were,
walked not by East or West.
When the King this Letter had read,
in heart he sighed full sore:
Take up the table then said he,
for I can eat no more.
The King then called his best Archers
to the Buts with him to go:
I will see these fellows shoot said he
that in the North have wrought this woe.
The Kings Bowmen bust them bliue,
and the Queens Archers also:
So did these wight yeomen,
with them they thought to go.
There twice or thrice they shot about,
for to assay their hand:
There was no shoot these yeomen shot,
That any prick might stand.
Then spake William of Cloudesle,
by him that for me died on tree,
I hold him never a good Archer,
that shooteth at Buts so wide.
Wherefore then said the King,
I pray thee tell to me:
At such a Butt sir he said,

as men use in my countrey.
William went into the field,
and his two brethren with him,
There they set up two hasel rods,
twenty score pace between:
I hold him an Archer, said Cloudesle,
that yonder wand cleaveth in two;
Here is none such, said the King,
for no man can so do.
I shall assay sir, said Cloudesle,
or that I further go:
Cloudesle with a bearing arrow,
cleave the wand in two.
Thou art the best Archer, said the King,
forsooth that ever I see:
And yet for your love said William
I will do more mastery,
I have a son is seven years old,
he is to me full dear:
I will tie him to a stake,
all shall see him that do pass,
And lay an apple upon his head,
and go six score pace him fro:
And I my self with a broad arrow,
shall cleave the apple in two.
Now hast thee then, said the King,
by him that dyed on a tree;
But if thou dost not as thou hast said,
hanged shalt thou be,
And thou touch his head or gown,
in sight that men may see:
By all the Saints that in Heaven be,
I shall you hang all three.
That I have promised said William,
I never will forsake:

And there eben before the King,
in the earth he drove a stake,
And bound thereto his eldest son,
and bad him stand full right:
And turned the childs face him fro,
because he should not start.
An Apple upon his head he set,
and then his bow he bent:
Sixscore paces there were met,
and thither Cloudesle went.
There he drew out a fair broad arrow,
his bow was great and long,
He set that arrow in his bow,
that was both stiff and strong,
He prayed the people that were there,
that they would still stand:
For he that shooteth for such a wager,
had need of a steddy hand.
Much people prayed for Cloudesle,
that his life saved might be:
And when he made him ready to shoot,
there was many a weeping eye.
Thus Cloudesle clave the Apple in two,
as many a man might see:
Now God forbid then said the King,
that thou shouldst shoot at me.
I give thee xviii. pence a day,
and my bow shalt thou bear:
And over all the North Country,
I make the chief Rider,
And I'le give thee xviii pence a day, said the Queen,
by God, and by my fay,
Come fetch thy payment when thou will,
no man shall say thee nay.
William, I make thee a Gentleman,

of clothing and of fee:
And thy two brethren yeomen of my Cham-
for they are lovely to see: (ber,
Your son for he is tender of age,
of my wine celloz shall be,
And when he comes to mans estate,
better preferred shall he be,
And William bring me your wife, said the
I long full sore to see: (Queen.
She shall be my chief Gentlewoman,
to govern my Nursery.
The yeomen thanked them full curteously,
and said to some Bishop we will wend,
Of all the sins that we have done,
to be assoyled at his hand.
So forth be gone these good yeomen,
as fast as they can hie,
And after came and lived with the King,
and died good yeomen all three.
Thus endeth the lives of these good yeomen,
God send them eternal bliss:
And all that with hand bow shooteth,
that of heaven may never miss.

FINIS.